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BOOK REVIEWS

MADAME GUYON ET FÉNELON, PRECURSEURS DE ROUSSEAU. Par Ernest Seillière, Membre de l'Institut. Paris: Félix Alcan. 1918.

"It is always your fault when your health is bad. . . . Upon a certain simple and tranquil fidelity [to God] depend healthful sleep, appetite, good digestion, ability to walk without fatigue. . . ."

The above passage, from a letter written toward the end of the seventeenth century by the celebrated Archbishop of Cambrai, François de la Mothe Fénelon, to Madame de Montberon, indicates that those Christian Scientists who contend that the practice of Christian healing was entirely neglected between the third century and the appearance of Mrs. Eddy, have stated their case a little too strongly. In these days when the dependence of matter on spirit is becoming increasingly evident and increasingly interesting to the average man,—witness the unprecedented current sale of books on this subject,—the initiative of the Quietists, Molinos, Madame Guyon and the author of *Telemachus* and *The Maxims of the Saints* means more to this generation, perhaps, than to our fathers.

It is not the physical side of Guyonism, however, which Baron Seillière has chosen to stress. This individualist movement in the bosom of the Church,—France was little touched by Protestantism, frankly so called, but she did not escape the contagion under other names,—this movement which constituted each faithful Christian his own priest and prophet, frightened Bossuet and the spiritual authorities of the day, and its social implications alarm our author. One of his recent books is entitled *The Peril of Mysticism in the Interpretation of Modern Democracies*. Madame Guyon — Fénelon — Rousseau — Jacobinism — Romanticism — Socialism. This is the line of descent as he traces it. If he adds Bolshevism, he will have given Madame Guyon (who abandoned her two fleshly sons to follow her divine mission, in the confidence, as she phrased it, that they would have Jesus and Mary for father and mother), a portentous Frankenstein of a child indeed.

Aside from its possible ultimate influences, the affair of Madame Guyon and the gifted moralist Fénelon is one of the most curious in the history of religious movements. She was three years the elder, and though the abbé was nominally her confessor, it was she rather than he who represented the creative influence. Her doctrine of fruitful submission to the Divine leading, of Quietistic passivity, went to the point of indifference as to personal salvation. "God eradicates all. . . He takes away even the desire for His love and His law." Her vagaries, softened and rationalized by her saner teacher-pupil, became, nevertheless, the object of Papal censure, and Fénelon was driven to a quasi-retractation. But his fundamental position never seriously changed, his influence, rather increased than diminished by the notoriety which spread from his defence of a publicly rebuked heretic, was large and permanent, and through the mouth of Rousseau, George Sand, Karl Marx, he has been speaking to successive generations ever since.

The quarrel with Bossuet was the eternal antagonism between authority and liberty, between reason and inspiration. The antithesis has rarely been sustained by nobler champions. Baron Seilliére has told the story delicately and well. To the lover of clear and accurate exposition of fine-drawn points of doctrine the book is a delight.

ROY TEMPLE HOUSE.

NEW STUDY OF ENGLISH POETRY. By Henry Newbolt. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company.

The twelve essays in Sir Henry Newbolt's *New Study of English Poetry* are built about his conception of poetry, which he defines as "the expression in speech, more or less rhythmical, of the æsthetic activity of the human spirit, the creative activity by which the world is presented to our consciousness." Good poetry is further defined as "the masterly expression of rare, complex and difficult states of consciousness: and great poetry, the poetry which has the power to stir many men and stir them deeply, is the expression of our consciousness of this world, tinged with man's universal longing for a world more perfect, nearer to the heart's desire." Eight of these essays are concerned with the more abstract presentation